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ABSTRACT

This paper reviews the sections of the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) that provide for using competencies gained by youth as evaluation tools. The paper discusses the types of competencies that youths should gain by such programs and how they should be measured, as an alternative to traditional program-based evaluation. The paper is organized in four major sections that discuss youth competencies in conjunction with (1) state and local decision making; (2) reporting alternatives; (3) modification of performance standards; and (4) present and future activities. An appendix reprints an article on "Establishing a Youth Competency System" by Rick Spill. (KC)

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Youth Competencies: The Next Steps

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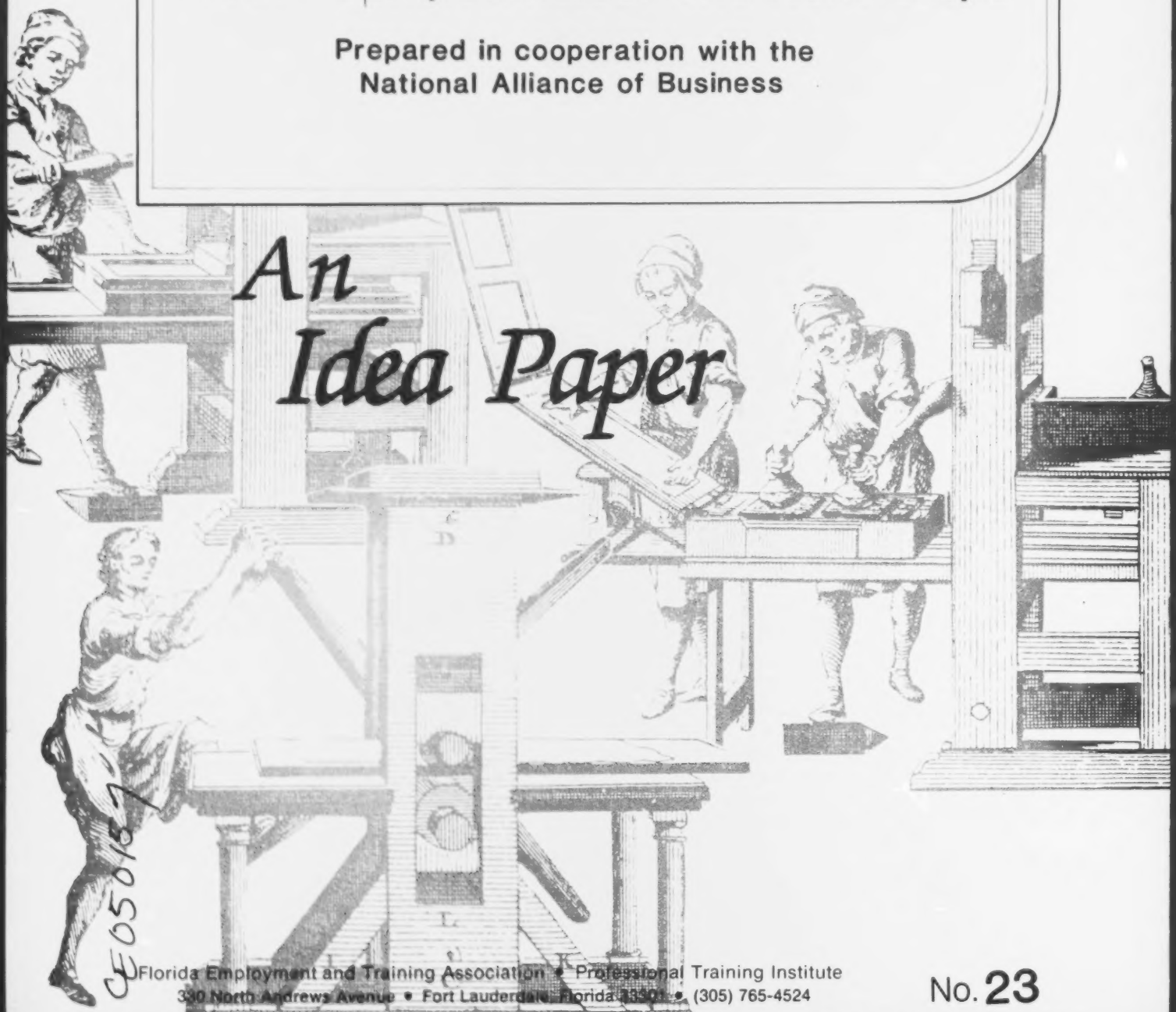

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FLORIDA EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING ADMINISTRATION

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YOUTH COMPETENCIES: THE NEXT STEPS

by

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This Idea Paper was prepared by Rick Spill as a follow-up to his article, "Establishing a Youth Competency System," which was published in the Spring 1984 issue of the PTI journal, ...etc. (see Appendix, page 45).

Rick Spill is currently project manager for the National Alliance of Business in Washington, D.C. He is primarily responsible for assisting Private Industry Councils, Service Delivery Areas, states, education agencies, and program operators in all aspects of youth competencies. Spill came to NAB from the National Governors Association where he was responsible for delivering general orientation, training, technical assistance and specific on-site problem-solving services across the country in all phases of Job Training Partnership Act program planning, operations, management and oversight. He is a specialist in projects designed to enhance the employability and employment prospects of young people, with particular expertise in the area of youth competencies.

Over the past 18 months, he has conducted more than 100 sessions nationwide instructing 6,000 individuals from every state and territory and approximately 400 local jurisdictions in the methods and techniques of establishing youth competency systems.

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I.

INTRODUCTION

The Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) includes performance standards which measure the accomplishment of overall program purposes. Under Sections 106(b)(2)(A) and 20 CFR 629.46(a) of the Act, the attainment of competencies recognized by Private Industry Councils (PICs) can be a part of the overall performance standards framework for all participants age 21 and under.

Prior to the new law, performance reviews focused mainly on post-termination labor market status and activity, with goals such as "75% of all youth leaving the program will enter unsubsidized employment, with 60% of them staying on the job for 180 days." JTPA expands outcomes review to competencies acquired through program participation and institution of such goals as "75% of all youth will learn to install basic kitchen wiring, with 60% of them attaining an eighth-grade reading level required to take and pass the electrician's apprenticeship test." This enables young people and youth-serving projects to receive credit for marketable skills acquired between intake and termination. It promotes accountability, justification of expenditures, the determination of cost-effectiveness and the dual-focus evaluation of intra-program participant gains and post-program results.

Under the competencies concept, Private Industry Councils (PICs) and employers can define private sector needs concerning worker skills and characteristics, reduce screening and training costs, ensure better prepared employees and improve program performance. Enrollees can get recognition for progress they make within a project, gain capacities relevant to employer demands, job requirements and entry-level qualifications, and improve their access to the primary labor market, post-secondary education, further training or military service.

Youth competencies are often a major tool for achieving the objectives of the eight-percent governor's set-aside fund to establish State Education Coordination and Cooperative Agreements and to deliver employability enriching services to program youth. Competencies constitute the substance around which the processes of collaboration and linkage-building occur naturally. Curricula, methods of instruction, learning plans and means of ascertaining achievement can now have portability. Those JTPA programs will have been through a thorough process of skill acquisition and documentation, thereby addressing concerns of articulation and mainstreaming. Young people will be better equipped to move between education and employment/training, and the necessary framework to ensure this movement will be buttressed by the competency systems now being established.

At the State and local levels, the design and institution of competencies systems can provide a forum for communication among employers, organized labor officials, government and legislative leaders, educators and vocational training administrators and practitioners in youth employment. There can be a commonality of learning objectives and attainment acceptable to and understood by those who teach young people, those who train them and those who hire them, as well as the youth themselves.

Several major competency categories signify the readiness of youth to transition from the program: Pre-employment, work maturity, basic education and job-specific skills.

Competency statements specify required proficiency in particular abilities which must be demonstrated by program youth and the means of determining how these abilities were acquired. They are formulated around functional program-related skills and reflect actual learning and achievement, not just the passage of time. They also should be simply stated, easily understood, practical and attainable and accurately measurable. Under JTPA, youth should only be assisted in those competency categories in which they show need.

II.

HORIZON WIDENING

Many individuals in Congress long advocated that achievement of competencies recognized by the PIC is an appropriate factor for evaluating the performance of youth programs. They feared that the youth performance standards (nationally: 82% positive terminations, including 41% entered employment and $4900 cost per positive termination) would promote "creaming"* and encourage the exclusion of in-school and at-risk youth from project participation. They continually encouraged the Department of Labor's (DOL) Employment and Training Administration (ETA) to include the statutorily defined and acceptable outcome--the attainment of youth competencies--as an employability enhancement termination factor.

Their efforts, among others, led to the issuance of ETA Field Memo 76-83, change 1, dated October 7, 1983. Now governors may permit Service Delivery Areas (SDAs) to count youth who terminate from JTPA programs and meet the youth competency requirements set by the local PIC as positive terminations for purposes of calculating the positive termination rate and cost per positive termination. The inclusion of youth competencies in the establishment and subsequent measurement of the two positive termination performance standards is permissible if the State determines

*Creaming: Enrolling those most likely to succeed.

that a locality has a youth competency system in place and that the PIC has recognized these youth employment competencies. If it is decided that an SDA's youth competency system has not been sufficiently developed to accurately measure participant achievement and enable the PIC to recognize such competencies, the governor should modify the performance standards accordingly.

ETA, following up its February 1, 1984, provisions published in the Federal Register, circulated a draft adjustment guide dated March 7, 1984, which states:

> "The Department considers youth employment competencies to be a most appropriate measure of the success of JTPA Title II-A youth participants and strongly encourages the development of youth competency systems. This is particularly important to the provision of positive outcomes for in-school youth."

Competencies should thus make it easier for localities to combat "creaming" and serve a wide range of in-school and at risk youth residing within their jurisdictions.

Program operators will be better able to intervene at the lower end of the labor market to enroll those most in need who can benefit from participation. Experience has show that employment and training projects have their highest net impact when they reach those disadvantaged young people who have the greatest problems.

III.

STATE AND LOCAL DECISION-MAKING

Youth employment competency systems and the competencies recognized by PICs are local, not State, decisions, as are judgements about whom to serve and how to serve them. Presently these decisions encompass the number of competencies required for certification in a major competency category, the number of indicators required at a particular level of achievement to be certified in a competency subset, or the testing and instrumentation techniques used to measure achievement. Localities cannot be forced to identify and establish competency statements for all of the possible categories. Some places may wish to start slowly and take on more complexity later in order to lay a firm foundation. The important thing locally is to start. States have an opportunity for quality assurance as they (1) determine whether PICs have recognized and approved the stated competencies in each locality and (2) ascertain the capacity of the system's methodology to reflect the acquisition of youth competencies.

The framework within which an SDA's youth competencies system should optimally be developed would include:

(a) One, some, or all of the major competency areas enumerated herein;

(b) An up-front assessment process to determine participant intra-program needs and appropriate site and services assignments;

(c) The availability of relevant curricula, training activities and intervention strategies; and

(d) An incremental/post-program evaluation process to ascertain whether a youth has attained the competencies specified for him/her.

Those variously charged with planning, establishing, administering and overseeing systems for determining the acquisition of youth competencies should be aware of differing roles and responsibilities at different levels. The State perspective entails facilitating but no responsibility for designing and implementing competency-based procedures. Those at the local level--PICs, SDAs and program operators--are charged with developing substantive competency criteria and making them work at the point of client contact. The main actors should seek to coordinate their efforts as much as possible to promote the evolution of competency statements and measures that have commonality and transferability among companies, industries, participants and labor markets. This can only work to the benefit of program participants.

States should primarily be concerned with:

- formulating concepts and defining terms;
- promulgating working practices and procedures;
- producing and disseminating appropriate materials;
- delivering orientation training, technical assistance and problem-solving services; and
- determining the impact of such efforts.

Localities should go through an informed, thoughtful and thorough process to draft and institute a youth competencies system which meets local labor market needs and conditions, thereby cementing the ownership felt by employers and educators in a system which evolves over time through investment of their energy and effort.

The establishment of a youth competency system should be knowledgeable, careful and deliberate to ease its fitting into local circumstances and situations and contributing to positive and progressive outcomes for clients and the community.

Cooperative and collaborative decision-making between states and their SDAs is definitely needed to reduce friction and ease the establishment of youth competency systems. This is being accomplished in two-thirds of the states through workgroups, task forces and forums which have been set up to maintain continuing dialogue, consultation, and progress between State and local officials.

Motivation to start competency-based programs has several sources: The desire to better equip young people to move into jobs, further education and training or military service; the potential for improvement in positive termination rates and costs; and the possibility of fiscal incentive awards. At this point, it is important to accommodate the often conflicting requirements of local flexibility, prerogative and operational control and State oversight responsibilities. It is also necessary to maintain a balance between the need to get as many youth competency systems functioning as soon as possible and the prevention of "bogus" systems lacking any substantive or procedural merit. The degree of difficulty with such a balancing act is increased by the wide latitude permitted localities and the range of variations to be found--even within a single state. However, there will always be differences, especially as some programs utilize

individualized competency-based approaches, while others take the standardized route.

"Dealing with the variations" can be accomplished by making PICs the overseers of the content of local competency systems (as provided for in Sections 103 (a), (b)(2), (d), (f), or having SDA director associations establish "codes of ethics" which could entail provisions about the scope and comparability of different competency systems. The effects of peer pressure should not be underestimated either. Few employment and training operators would want it known or would care to say that they plan and run projects for reasons other than meeting client needs, achieving financial accountability and effective outcomes, or maintaining personal and professional integrity.

A variety of important issues mark the odyssey of youth competencies from a nationally legislated program element, through State administrative considerations, to a locally operational reality designed to fit the different circumstances unique to nearly 600 separate jurisdictions in 57 states and territories. These factors encompass means of influencing the evolution of local competency systems and include the following topics (all of which are interrelated):

A. Policy;

B. Job Training Plan Instructions:

C. Governor's Coordination and Special Services Plan;

D. Management Information Systems (MIS), Tracking and Documentation;

E. Incentive Awards; and

F. Monitoring and Review.

A. POLICY

Localities select the population to be served, the activities to be provided and the service deliverers, but job training plans must still be certified by the State Job Training Coordinating Council and approved by the governor in light of established State policies.

The State should work to ensure the development of sound youth competency systems at the local level that are in accordance with the coordination criteria in the governor's coordination and special services plan. State policy should be supportive of the implementation of local competency-based programming and be responsive to requests for help by establishing vehicles for providing information, resource sharing, staff assistance, and suggestions for designing and instituting workable approaches to competencies. Policy issuances from the State ought to include clear definitions and procedures understandable to program operators. Such guidelines would cover (a) PIC endorsement/recognition of competencies and proof thereof, and (b) compliance with applicable JTPA legal and regulatory provisions.

For PIC endorsement and recognition, the State might require a signed form indicating PIC concurrence, minutes of the PIC meeting at which the competencies were accepted or a letter from the PIC chairperson certifying that the PIC approves of the youth competency statements and measures to be used by the SDA.

In seeking compliance with JTPA provisions, the State should not attempt to restrict the range of capabilities that an SDA/PIC can select as important for youth, but rather make sure that the competencies are objective, understandable and written and that the outcome determination instruments yield findings that measurably demonstrate the acquisition of skills,

knowledge, attitudes and behavior.

The State cannot prescribe the specific context of youth competencies systems, nor the particular ways in which they are to be operated. However, the State can require that competencies be employment-related and that levels of achievement be established for each activity in which competencies will be taught and measured. The governor can influence the general structure of youth competencies systems in each local jurisdiction through such devices as policy guidelines or issuances.

For example, State policy could require that only participants who have attained competencies as a result of the program can be counted as positive terminations. It would be misleading for an SDA to count as positive terminations those young people who--upon program entry--already possessed competencies recognized by the PIC. While not directly mandating any systemic elements, this policy makes it clear that an SDA should have evidence of program-related competency acquisition. This indirectly tells a locality that to get percentage points for positive results in youth competencies, the program should have:

1. Assessment of client needs and proficiencies at program entry to determine learning requirements;

2. Identification of a plan of activities and services which builds youths' weaknesses into strengths;

3. Training modules and curricula which teach the competencies approved by the PIC and are capable of remedying existing problems;

4. Evaluation of client achievement in the competency areas using valid and reliable instruments and techniques; and

5. Methods for recording, reporting and verifying measurement results, including certification of competencies attained.

Each locality doing youth competencies is--optimally--responsible for:

1. Choosing competency areas and the desired competencies within each major category and getting them recognized by the PIC;

2. Identifying programs in which the skills, knowledge, attitudes and behavior will be taught;

3. Developing and selecting indicators, measurement instruments, scoring procedures and levels of achievement;

4. Getting a wide range of individuals involved in designing and building the youth competency system, including SDA staff, PIC members, educators, program operators, instructors, labor representatives, people from business and industry, government leaders, community-based organization personnel, and youth themselves;

5. Gathering, accessing, interpreting, utilizing, storing and retrieving data related to competency attainment; and

6. Formulating credentials which will help young people get jobs, enter education or training institutions or join the military.

Policy flows vertically in a national-state-local manner. It is also fashioned horizontally at the local level between the SDA and the PIC. Policies made by the SDA and the PIC affect the operations of subcontractors and service providers. Careful attention to detail is important where competencies vary among agencies and deliverers of various activities, as is common in some large local jurisdictions. In such situations, quality assurance in the establishment of substantive competency systems can be facilitated by judicious use of requests for proposal packages, performance-based contracting and fixed unit price contracting.

This is especially relevant in light of Public Law 98-524, the Vocational Education Reauthorization Act of 1984 (renamed the Carl Perkins Vocational Education Act of 1984), which was enacted on October 19, 1984. Section 7 of the Vocational Education Act legislation modifies section 629.38(e)(2)(iii) of the JTPA regulations governing the use of fixed unit price contracts. Formerly, fixed unit price contracts could make full payment and be charged entirely to the training cost allocation category, "only upon completion of training by a participant and placement of the participant into unsubsidized employment in the occupation trained for and at not less than the wage specified in the

agreement." Now, with the modification, the scope of fixed unit price contracting also includes--in the case of youth--full payment for training packages purchased competitively pursuant to Section 141(d)(3) of JTPA, if the training results in either placement in unsubsidized employment or the attainment of an outcome specified in Section 106(b)(2) of JTPA.

These other outcomes encompass achievement of competencies recognized by the Private Industry Council, completion of elementary, secondary or post-secondary school, or the equivalent thereof, enrollment in other training programs or apprenticeship, and enlistment in the armed forces. "Commercially available training packages," referenced above, include advanced learning technology, and may be purchased for "off-the-shelf" prices without requiring a cost allocation breakdown if they have built-in performance criteria.

The impact of Section 7 on the ability to charge--totally to the training category--activities which teach youth competencies depends upon the interpretation of the phrase "commercially available training packages." If such items are limited to hardware and software, the fiscal, administrative and operational effects will be less than a ruling which entails active program modalities (e.g., basic skills classes, world of work awareness/ counseling sessions, and labor market information/employability development workshops) written into an intervention strategy that is selected through a competitive proposal process. Cost allocation will therefore depend as much on the learning processes and instructional materials used, as on the results achieved.

B. JOB TRAINING PLAN (JTP) INSTRUCTIONS

More and more states, in an effort to promote the development of local youth competency systems, are requiring SDAs and PICs to consider an array of employment-related competencies. The plan would then specify reasons why some or all of them were or were not adopted and implemented. This approach raises "competency-consciousness" and makes local jurisdictions address the issue.

JTP instructions can request a detailed description of the competency system which is to be set up in each locality, including recognized competency categories and skill, knowledge, attitudinal and behavioral subsets, articulated means of measurement and demonstration of achievement, and necessary levels of proficiency for credentialing or certification.

Planning instructions can also ask SDAs/PICs to submit clearly written, objective-based competency statements and to describe how they will follow policy guidelines, coordination criteria and reporting, tracking and documentation requirements. Local plans thus become roadmaps for operating effective and efficient systems and serve as vehicles for cooperation and communication between the State and each jurisdiction.

Since competency systems are coming "on-line" at different times, States should set forth flexible mechanisms for getting them into JTPs, most likely as modifications or addenda.

C. GOVERNOR'S COORDINATION AND SPECIAL SERVICES PLAN (GCSSP)

Under Section 121(a)(1) of JTPA, each State is to prepare a statement of goals and objectives for job training and placement programs within its boundaries. The GCSSP sets criteria for coordinating JTPA activities with the programs of agencies and organizations having a direct interest in employment, training and human resource utilization (e.g., academic and vocational education, public assistance, rehabilitation, economic development and job service). This plan shall outline the projected use of fiscal, personnel, material, temporal and spatial resources, identify priorities and describe oversight procedures. The criteria established under the GCSSP should not affect local discretion concerning the selection of eligible participants or service providers.

Yet, within the fine line between general State purview and overall quality assurance and local latitude and flexibility needed to meet specific jurisdictional circumstances, there is indeed room to include youth competencies as a key coordination criteria element to erect bridges among employment and training agencies, educational institutions, business and industry, labor, community-based organizations and government. Establishing youth competency systems for the benefit of young people mutually served by such diverse yet related groups would promote cooperation, collaboration, communication, efficiency and effectiveness while reducing fragmentation, duplication, overlap and the possibility of young people "falling through the cracks." The issue of youth competencies is of

sufficient substance and potential impact to effect a vibrant, vital and working coalition of individuals from a variety of disciplines. The States can play a pivotal role in this type of effort by providing requested and appropriate information and technical assistance in developing and implementing comprehensive projects and by offering preservice and inservice staff training in planning and managing such undertakings.

As stated in Section 104(b)(7) of JTPA, each SDA/PICs Job Training Plan should contain a description of methods for complying with the coordination criteria in the GCSSP. The governor can disapprove a local JTPA if the plan (or modification) does not comply with the coordination criteria enacted under Section 121(b) of JTPA. Utilizing the concept of youth competencies to effect linkages between JTPA programs and activities in related fields is a practical, realistic, and prudent means to further the evolution of competency-based projects.

D. MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEMS, TRACKING AND DOCUMENTATION

In those localities setting up youth competencies systems, the SDA/PIC determines the content, substance and format of the competencies through the development and recognition process. In states where the attainment of competencies is counted in calculating positive termination rates and the cost per positive termination, the State is responsible for formulating management information systems (MIS), tracking and documentation procedures. The governor may establish several generic categories (e.g., pre-employment, work maturity, basic education and job-specific skills) in which achievements are to be listed as positive outcomes under the youth competencies data entry heading.

Since local jurisdictions write their own competency statements in short, long, sentence or matrix fashion and determine their own means of measurement, states ought to look carefully at their tracking and documentation requirements. Will states ask for too much or too little? Where are the boundaries? What is the best combination of qualitative or quantitative information to act as evidence supporting learning gains?

The most beneficial way to handle MIS, tracking and documentation functions is through a cooperative and collaborative State-local effort. There is a need to define terms such as "sufficiently developed" or "capable of yielding accurate results" in a simple and mutually acceptable manner in order to avoid misunderstandings and bureaucratic entanglements. (Arriving at such definitions may be appropriate workgroup tasks.) Actual utilization of a local youth competency system's outcomes by business and industry for hiring purposes and by schools and the armed services for admissions purposes would seem to clearly indicate the validity and reliability of the measurement process.

E. INCENTIVE AWARDS

A wide range of approaches are being taken to the awarding of six-percent incentive funds for exceeding performance standards. Some states have competitive structures, while others reserve so much for each SDA. Some states require a certain number of standards to be exceeded out of the total established, while others have set up constructs in which all the standards must be exceeded before incentive awards will be given. In some states, the elements are weighted and productivity factors have been added, while in others, this is not the case. Various states have different combinations of the above items.

The inclusion of youth competencies in a State's performance standards incentive awards structure would provide additional impetus and rationale for localities to establish competency-based programs. Through the performance standards framework, states should be able to influence the design and implementation of systems that will feature at least some--if not all--of the four major competency categories. Making documented achievement in acquisition of skills, knowledge, attitudes or behavior gains a means of obtaining needed extra funds (or avoiding corrective action) could spur SDAs/PICs to seek bonus money (or freedom from outside intervention) by instituting sound and effective youth competency statements and measures. States could emphasize certain types of competency attainment, just as they can focus on other concepts like follow-up findings, job retention, and cumulative increases in income.

A stronger emphasis should be placed on developing performance standards which encompass youth competencies. This would strengthen the administration, management, operation and oversight of JTPA programs, promote improved performance, and remove some of the existing ambiguity concerning the relationship of youth competencies to meeting or exceeding performance standards and the awarding of incentive funds. Right now, getting good positive termination percentages and cost per positive termination rates are the biggest motivators for those at the local level to develop competency systems, because the relationship to the bottom line is clear--good outcomes. If youth competencies were more firmly gounded in the formulation of performance standards at the national and state levels, the awarding of incentive dollars could constitute a greater motivational factor for localities to install competency systems because the payoff would be better delineated--more money. The timing of when competency results become countable is important, especially since systems will initially start

at different points in the program year.

F. MONITORING AND REVIEW

Monitoring and review procedures ascertain that policies are followed, plans become actualized, coordination criteria are in effect, MIS, documentation and tracking requirements are fulfilled, deadlines are met and performance is correctly gauged.

They can assure that there is adherence to the appropriate PIC recognition process and determine the capacity of measurement instruments to yield accurate results once competency-related terminations occur in each jurisdiction.

Program monitoring and review, like the other elements presented in the preceding subsections, are mechanisms for ensuring proper State governance and oversight, appropriate local latitude and flexibility, and necessary distinctions in State-local roles, responsibilities and prerogatives. At first, it may be more prudent to use monitoring and review procedures as means for identifying and preventing problems and for establishing a positive foundation for technical assistance and training than as heavy compliance tools for instituting corrective action.

IV.

REPORTING ALTERNATIVES

The Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration (DOL/ETA) has revised the definitions of youth positive termination rate and cost per positive termination rate. Positive terminations now encompass: entered unsubsidized employment, employability enhancement, and attainment of PIC-recognized youth competencies (pre-employment, work maturity, basic education and job-specific skills). These modifications have been partially taken into account by various means of reporting young people terminating from JTPA programs on the Job Training Partnership Act Annual Status Report (JASR).

Some alterations still need to be made, however. The JASR collects information on entry to unsubsidized employment, the armed forces, or a registered apprenticeship program. It also gathers data on "youth employability enhancement terminations" which are defined as outcomes for youth that are "recognized as enhancing long-term employability and contributing to the potential for a long-term increase in earnings and employment." Results which meet this requirement are: (1) entered non-Title II training; (2) returned to full-time school; (3) completed major level of education;

(4) age 14 to 15 year olds completed program objectives. The JASR aggregates all other outcomes--both successful and unsuccessful--under the item "all other terminations," including the acquisition of youth competencies. With no formal means to disaggregate competency attainment, there is no way to get a true picture of program performance or the rate/cost of positive terminations. This lumping process must be corrected as soon as possible. Youth competencies are countable as positive terminations and should be reflected separately in the JASR as are entered unsubsidized employment and employability enhancement terminations.

Inclusion of youth competencies would facilitate efficient impact measurement, effective project management and acknowledgement of outstanding young people. Most importantly, it would reflect what is actually happening in the real world of employment and training.

A. RECOMMENDATIONS

The JASR should be changed by (a) expanding the reporting categories and data base and (b) recording and retrieving information on all types of competency achievement. There is a chilling effect, a disincentive, when youth competencies systems are established and then the results are reported as negative terminations.

Competency attainment should be included and delineated on the face of the JASR. DOL should design and institute means to record and report the achievement of youth competencies separately from other kinds of terminations. The JASR would thus encompass the following:

1. Establishment of a new category--"Attained Youth Competencies"--and separate line items under this heading.

   The present DOL taxonomy has three varieties of competencies--Pre-employment and Work Maturity, Basic Education, and Job-Specific

Skills. By assigning the letter "A" to pre-employment and work maturity, the letter "B" to basic education and the letter "C" to job-specific skills, seven possible combinations are evolved: A, B, C, AB, AC, BC, and ABC. These can be applied either on a national or state basis, as will be seen in subsection B (optional JASR formats).

This comprehensive approach has been discussed with hundreds of representatives from states, SDAs, PICs, and education agencies across the country and has been received most enthusiastically as a way of getting a full picture of the different options and outcomes possible under competency-based programming.

Following such a course can make competencies at least as comparable--yet flexible--as the tens of thousands of jobs listed in the Dictionary of Occupational Titles, the thousands of military occupational specialities, the hundreds of registered apprenticeable vocations, and the multiple jurisdictional variations--both state and local--in being trained and educated for such labor market positions.

2. Addition of the word "positive" to line I.B. of the JASR so that it would now read "Total Positive Terminations."

This would bring the reporting format in line with the definition of positive terminations and the factors included under the phrase. Line I.B.3 ("All Other Terminations") should then be changed to line I.C. to clarify confusion "in the field" and delineate those results (e.g., left town, voluntarily/involuntarily separated from program with no actual outcome achieved, or sickness/death which are not countable as positive terminations.

3. Differentiation of "Completed Major Level of Education" from "Attained Youth Competencies."

"Completed Major Level of Education" currently is interpreted to cover completion, during enrollment in JTPA, of a level of educational achievement which had not been reached at the time of program entry. Levels of educational attainment (listed in the legislation) are elementary, secondary and post-secondary. Passage of time in a structured setting sets the norm for this categorization.

Acquisition of youth competencies entails demonstration of proficiency in certain cognitive or affective abilities in concrete and measurable terms. Competencies reflect functional, project-related skills, knowledge, attitudes and behavior. Their purpose is to facilitate labor market entry, upgrade readiness to transition from the program to a desired post-program status, increase the employability of young people and develop performance capabilities.

Distinguishing "Completed Major Level of Education" from acquisition of youth competencies in a meaningful, non-confusing, easily understood fashion would avoid double counting, promote greater accountability, and improve the capacity of the reporting process to capture what is occuring throughout the country.

Factors delineating "Major Level of Education" from youth competencies entail: the nature of the items (status/capability), the kind of award (formal/informal), the type of intervention and its operational context, and whether or not the process has been accredited.

"Major Level of Education" completion denotes achievement of a particular status, e.g., a "graduate." Youth competencies attainment connotes enhanced capabilities in pre-employment, work maturity, basic education, and/or job-specific skills "Completed Major Level of Education" should only be denoted by a degree, credential or diploma (or the equivalent thereof). Acquisition of youth competencies indicates attainment of foundational learning objectives with gains determined by application of a variety of testing and measurement instruments such as:

- Adult Basic Learning Exam
- Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery
- Bennet Hand Tool Dexterity Test
- Clerical Skills Series
- Electrical Sophistication Test
- Jewish Employment Vocational Service Work Sample System
- Peabody Individual Achievement Test
- Short Occupational Knowledge Tests
- Singer Vocational Evaluation System
- Stanford Achievement Test
- Student Occupational Competency Achievement Test
- Talent Assessment Program
- Test of Adult Basic Education
- Valpar Component Work Sample System
- United States Employment Service Basic Occupational Literacy Test.

Scores on such devices demonstrating measurable increases in abilities or improvement in proficiency by "X years" or certain increments is often noted by the award of an informal certificate

within the field. Competency gains should be used as stepping stones for obtaining academic credit, major levels of education or occupational licenses.

Section 4(1) of JTPA states that no academic credit for education, training or work experience applicable to a secondary school diploma, a post-secondary degree, or an accredited certificate of completion can be awarded without being "consistent with applicable State law and regulation and the requirements of an accredited educational agency or institution in a State." Section 141 (o) further provides that education programs for youth under JTPA must be "consistent with applicable state and local educational standards."

The "Major Level of Education" process is conducted in accredited institutions such as high schools/alternative schools, community and junior colleges, vocational training institutes/area vocational schools, four-year colleges, and licensed proprietary schools and covers set time-frames that usually apply beyond local JTPA defined jurisdictional boundaries. The JTPA competencies process is generally locally based, not yet accredited, and occurs in-house, at a job site, or through contracts with the aforementioned institutions for shorter periods of time and with a narrower subject focus.

Discerning pre-employment and work maturity competencies from "Major Level of Education" is not a problem. The issue blurs a bit in the areas of basic education and job-specific skills, and the key tool is common sense. Taking a course in remedial reading is different from graduating from high school. Training on the job in a business or industrial setting where accomplishments are marked by a worksite supervisor's signature on a rating form

is different from classroom training taught by a certified instructor in an accredited vocational school where achievement is signified by award of a diploma, even if the occupations are similar. Although "Completed Major Level of Education" (status) and "Attained Youth Competencies" (gains in learning objectives) are different, they both should be listed under the Youth Employability Enhancement Terminations category. Each contributes to a young person's capacity to enter unsubsidized employment. Until agreement can be reached with the educational establishment so that youth competency systems may be used in lieu of the traditional Carnegie Unit methodology for awarding educational credit, it will be necessary to separately identify the activities.

Finally, given DOL's current definition of Major Level of Education, "moving from one grade to another" should not be reported as "Completed Major Level of Education" or "Attained Youth Competencies." It should, however, be recognized that both the Census Bureau and the National Center for Educational Statistics include grade level in their definition of level of education. More work obviously needs to be done in differentiating "Completed Major Level of Education" from "Attained Youth Competencies." This part is offered as a starting point.

4. Institution of reporting priorities for the different line items and data elements.

The foundation for a hierarchy of reporting categories has already seen its origin in present JTPA requirements. Only one outcome can be reported for each participant to avoid double-counting, even where a youth achieves multiple results such as competencies, major level of education and a job. If a young person

enters unsubsidized employment, then he/she should not be counted as an employability enhancement termination, even if one of those items is accomplished on the way to getting a job. If a youth is countable as an employability enhancement termination, that individual should be reported in only one line item under this category even though more than one may have been achieved.

Delineation of the types of outcomes obtainable--post-program status like "employee, apprentice, member of the armed services, trainee, student or graduate" or an intra program gain in "skill, knowledge, attitude or behavior"--helps clarify their positions in terms of reporting priorities, which are in order "entered unsubsidized employment," "employability enhancement terminations" (other than competency acquisition) and "attained youth competencies." This would, of course, include the addition of a line-item category entitled "Attained Youth Competencies," as outlined in recommendation 1.

Through commonly accepted definitions, line items can be established which report the whole spectrum of youth competencies acquisition where they are final products of JTPA participation. As a subpart of "Youth Employability Enhancement Terminations," these would be included within line I.B. (Total Positive Terminations). Such a distinction of the development obtained by JTPA youth provides a solid picture of this legislation's impact on young people.

5. Elimination of "Age 14-15 Completed Program Objectives."

At present, this data element is reported in line I.B.2. (Youth

Employability Enhancement Terminations), yet it has no clear meaning or purpose (as phrased), and no separate item sub-breakout is required for it. Data on the participation of 14-15 year olds is included under line II.(Terminees Performance Measures Information) in the categories dealing with age. Since 14-15 year olds will usually be enrolled to learn skills, knowledge, attitudes, and behavior, the outcomes they achieve should be reported under a category indicating the attainment of youth competencies.

Therefore, "Age 14-15 Completed Program Objectives" ought to be dropped from the JASR narrative and from the total in line I.B.2. Results of young people in this age group who obtain PIC-recognized competencies would be counted as positive terminations under the "Attained Youth Competencies" line item.

6. Insertion of a new data element--"Obtained Job"--under the category "Entered Unsubsidized Employment" so that the number of participants getting full- or part-time work can be easily determined from those becoming apprentices or members of the armed forces)

This eliminates the present necessity of subtracting I.B.1.a and I.B.1.b from the total in line I.B.1 in order to ascertain how many terminees are working in capacities other than apprentices or members of the armed forces.

7. Expansion of the JASR reporting requirements to encompass gains made by young people in the Title IIB Summer Youth Employment and Training Program (SYETP) under the categories of entered unsubsidized employment, employability enhancement terminations, and attained PIC-recognized youth competencies.

This could be a means of emphasizing that summer programs are

vehicles for young people to enter the labor market or acquire the capabilities of successfully doing so.

8. Inclusion of a new employability enhancement termination line item countable as a positive termination--"Potential Dropout Continued Full-TIme in Secondary or Post-Secondary Academic or Vocational School" (assuming that such eligible individuals can be identified and their status clearly defined).

   Some indices of dropout potential are: poor attendance records, decline in performance, credit deficiency, disciplinary problems, behavioral episodes, negative outlook or attitudes as reported by teachers or counselors. This category would only be for in-school youth, while "Returned to Full-Time School" would only be for out-of-school youth. All other types of positive termination line items are for both in-school and out-of-school youth.

9. Establishment of categories to separately record instances in which youth competencies are achieved as stepping stones or building blocks for getting young people jobs or other types of employability enhancement terminations.

   These distinctions would show the relationship of learning gains and post-program status acquisition. They would not be aggregated in the sum of lines I.B (Total Positive Terminations) and I.C (All Other Terminations.

B. OPTIONAL JASR FORMATS

The two examples which follow--one national and one state--are possible methods of reporting which encompass the nine recommendations made previously. Each entails multiple line items under the "Attained Youth

Competencies" category. Fewer youth competency data elements will appear on the national "participation and termination summary" example than on the state example.

NATIONAL

NATIONAL JASR PARTICIPATION AND TERMINATION SUMMARY

	Youth IIA (C)	Youth IIB (d)
A. Total Participants.		
B. Total Positive Terminations (total of 1 and 2).		
1. Entered Unsubsidized Employment (Total of a, b, and c).		
a. Obtained Job (full/part time working for self or other).		
b. Entered Registered Apprenticeship Program.		
c. Entered Armed Forces.		
2. Youth Employability Enhancement Terminations (Total of a,b, c, and d).		
a. Entered Non-Title II Training.		
b. Potential Dropout continued full-time in secondary or post-secondary academic or vocational school.		
c. Returned to Full-Time School.		
d. Completed Major Level of Education.		
e. Attained Youth Competencies (Total of 1,2,3 and 4).		
1. Pre-Employment and Work Maturity.		
2. Basic Education.		
3. Job-Specific Skills.		
4. Combinations of 1,2, &3).		
C. All Other Terminations.		
D. Attained Youth Competencies and Entered Unsubsidized Employment.		
E. Attained Youth Competencies and Other Youth Employment Enhancement Termination.		

STATE

STATE (JASR FEED-IN) PARTICIPATION AND TERMINATION SUMMARY

	Youth IIA (C)	Youth IIB(d)
A. Total Participants		
B. Total Positive Terminations (total of 1 and 2)		
1. Entered Unsubsidized Employment (total of a, b, and c)		
a. Obtained Job (full/part-time working for self or others		
b. Entered Registered Apprenticeship Program.		
c. Entered Armed Forces.		
2. Youth Employability Enhancement Terminations (total of a, b, c and d).		
a. Entered Non-Title II training.		
b. Potential Dropout continued full-time in secondary or post-secondary academic or vocational school.		
d. Completed Major Level of Education.		
e. Attained Youth Competencies (total of 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7).		
1. Pre-employment and Work Maturity.		
2. Basic Education.		
3. Job-Specific Skills.		
4. Pre-employment and Work Maturity and Basic Education.		
5. Pre-employment and Work Maturity and Job-Specific Skills.		
6. Basic Education and Job-Specific Skills.		
7. Pre-employment and Work Maturity, Basic Education and Job-Specific Skills.		
C. All Other Terminations.		
D. Attained Youth Competencies and Entered Unsubsidized Employment.		
E. Attained Youth Competencies and Other Youth Employability Enhancement Termination.		

C. RATIONALE

The two options presented in subsection B are viable alternatives to present national and state approaches. These suggested methods could:

a. Establish clear definitions that provide for large-scale commonality yet permit local variations and program flexibility;

b. Institute a hierarchy of reporting categories that reflect the purpose of the JTPA--attainment of particular post-program labor market status and achievement of intra-program learning objectives;

c. Provide the needed data base for youth competencies and an operational incentive to establish such systems; and

d. Correlate possible cause-effect elements that will help ascertain the relationships among what works best for whom, when, where, why and how.

For youth competencies, states and localities could use the workgroup approach and agree on three or four major categorical definitions of competency areas. Then, as youth complete programs in each SDA, the competency results would be recorded and reported in one of the three or four agreed-upon classifications regardless of what the local project is called. If young people learn how to do resumes, interviews and applications, master daily living and survival skills, and describe the requirements and working conditions of ten different jobs, the outcomes can all be listed under the pre-employment category. Local projects can still be labeled job clubs, self-help groups, career counseling or whatever. Jurisdictional latitude is not impinged, yet a vital means of determining what young people are learning in each state is set up. While this vehicle requires a great deal of preparatory and developmental effort, it will eventually evolve into an administrative

data element entry function that will become easier as time passes and terms become more familiar. The same technique for setting up clear and common denominator-oriented definitions can be carried out among and within states.

The major categories signifying the readiness of youth to transition from JTPA programs are: pre-employment, work maturity, basic education, and job-specific skills. (Although there are four areas of youth competencies, the first two have been combined by the Department of Labor in several publications for ease of implementation.) These categories might be delineated as follows:

- Pre-employment skills include world of work awareness, labor market knowledge, occupational information, values clarification and personal understanding, career planning, decision-making and job search techniques (resumes, interviews, applications, and follow-up letters). They also encompass survival/daily living skills such as using the phone, telling time, shopping, making change, renting an apartment, opening a bank account and using public transportation.

- Work maturity skills include positive work habits, attitudes and behavior such as punctuality, regular attendance, presenting a neat appearance, getting along and working well with others, exhibiting good conduct, following instructions and completing tasks, accepting criticism from supervisors and coworkers, showing initiative and reliability, and assuming the responsibilities involved in maintaining a job. This category also entails developing motivation and adaptability, obtaining effective interpersonal relations, coping and problem-solving skills, and acquiring an improved self-image.

- o Basic education skills include reading comprehension, math computation, writing, speaking, listening, nonverbal communication and the capacity to use these skills in the workplace.
- o Primary job-specific skills encompass the proficiency to perform actual tasks and technical functions required by certain occupational fields at entry, intermediate or advanced levels. Secondary job-specific skills entail familiarity with and use of set-up procedures, safety measures, work-related terminology, record-keeping and paperwork formats, tools, equipment and materials, and breakdown and clean-up routines.

These classifications would constitute the common frame of reference under which variations would "roll up" for reporting. This could prove the worth of competencies and show that they are far from being "soft" means to operate easy programs and run up "high scores." Rather, they would be employer-validated, demonstrable and capacity-building and contribute greatly to the transition of youth from programs to work. Youth competencies help young people get jobs, provide springboards to other types of employability enhancement terminations or comprise the end results of JTPA participation.

As stated previously, reporting can provide the data base which would lend impetus to the competency movement by documenting its impact, motivating agencies and individuals to design good, progressive systems, and promoting an increase in the comprehensiveness of JTPA-SDA/PIC projects. The aggregation of State and national outcomes obtained could also furnish badly needed information for the promulgation of youth program performance standards and show that JTPA has the means to avoid creaming and expand services to in-school and at-risk young people.

Collection of this kind of information would enable us to move ever closer to finding out the correlations between client charactistics, mix of program activities and services, and types of results garnered (jobs, employability improvement, and competency gains). Should certain programs be set up for in-school youth, out-of-school youth or both? Will young people at different stages of development be affected differently by various intervention strategies? Focus on answering these questions would facilitate better client feedback; participant labor market entry; short- and long-term program congruency; project planning, management and performance; and policy-making.

V.

MODIFICATION OF PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

A young person is considered a positive termination if he/she achieves one of the following outcomes: unsubsidized employment; a youth employability enhancement termination; or a PIC-recognized employment competency. By definition, the Secretary of Labor's national performance standards for the youth positive termination percentage and cost per positive termination provide for the inclusion of youth competencies attainment. Since the national standards and the nationally developed optional adjustment methodologies presume the inclusion of such terminees, there is no necessity to modify the performance standards that are established for SDAs which have recognized employment competencies.

As indicated in an earlier section, if the governor determines that an SDA's youth competency system is non-existent or has not been sufficiently developed to enable the PIC to recognize such competencies and accurately measure participant achievement, the governor should adjust the performance standards accordingly. Apparently, the need for such adjustment stems from differences between the data used to set the standards (CETA Title IV-A from FY '82) and comparable JASR definitions and line items presently in use.

The question of modifying performance standards due to the absence of operative, recognized local youth competencies systems raises some interesting issues. "Should adjust" might mean "have to modify," "ought to modify," or "can modify." The last alternative seems to be the generally accepted viewpoint. If a state employs the "can modify" interpretation, then two possibilities exist. First, the governor may say, in effect, that it's all right not to do youth competencies, and adjust the positive termination rates accordingly--down for the percentage and up for the costs for. Second, the governor can play "hard ball" and say that it's all right not to have a youth competencies system, but there will be no adjustment. Therefore, each SDA would have to take its best shot at meeting the performance standards with or without the benefit of counting youth competencies. Those doing competencies would be better set than those not establishing such systems. The course chosen in each state will have a profound effect upon the evolution of youth competencies systems there, and either provide an incentive or disincentive for local jurisdictions to develop competency-based programs.

Should modification of performance standards be the course followed within a state, then the adjustments ought to be done right--with statistical integrity and accuracy. However, there does not seem to be widespread understanding of why adjustment may be appropriate or how it should be undertaken (e.g., techniques, mechanisms, logistics, timelines, structure, or framework). This is due to the newness of the concept and the lack of available guidance in relevant modification methodology. Many still wonder whether adjustment ought to be applied in PY '84, PY '85, both or neither.

National performance standards are based on CETA Title IV-A data which does not include competencies. To modify correctly, then an analysis should be made of previous, similar programs operated under CETA, particularly if the SDA was a CETA prime sponsor. Those making the adjustments must know what

happened in a specific jurisdiction under CETA--characteristics of clients served, activities and services offered and delivered, project purpose and focus and results achieved. This is not always possible because of lost or incomplete information, differences in definitions, terminology, administrative and operational procedures and unfamiliarity with past events which occurred in "new SDAs"--those that were not prime sponsors or areas constituting parts of one or more former CETA primes.

The competency movement has gathered great momentum in the past year. Barriers to this impetus--such as allowing adjustments to be used as part of the basis for an incentive award--should be avoided. Those working hard to establish youth competency systems might say, "why bother?" if they see others reaping rewards without expending comparable effort. Finally, it makes sense to exclude youth competencies from the modeling and information-weighing process until the previously mentioned data base is available, and local systems have time to fully develop. Start-up problems associated with data collection should be quickly alleviated in order to allow competencies to be incorporated into youth performance standards by PY '86.

VI.

PRESENT AND FUTURE ACTIVITIES

Many analogies parallel the birth of a new concept such as youth competencies. This innovative idea is moving along quite well--better than many predicted. Such progress is due to a great investment of time, concern, resources, and nurturing efforts from a variety of agencies. Though much remains to be done, a solid foundation has been established during the past 18 months, including:

- Quality publications such as the Brandeis University manual on youth competencies commissioned by the Department of Labor;
- Six national seminars covering youth competencies and performance standards offered by the Employment and Training Administration and attended by people from more than 90 percent of the states and territories;
- Five regional forums featuring youth competencies sponsored by the National Association of Private Industry Councils (NAPIC) in cooperation with the National Governors Association (NGA) and the National Alliance of Business (NAB) attended by individuals representing more than 35 state JTPA offices and 100 local PICs and SDAs;

- Scores and scores of sessions and meetings conducted across the country by the NGA which taught thousands of individuals--decision-makers and practitioners--from all the states and territories and hundreds of SDAs, PICs, education agencies and service providers about youth competencies;
- Dozens and dozens of similar undertakings and site visits delivered by NAPIC, Brandeis University, the Remediation and Training Institute, and reputable, highly skilled independent consultants, such as Gerard F. Fiala;
- A series of four nationwide NGA youth competencies "Train the Trainer" workshops conducted by an advanced faculty of instructors from a number of states and local jurisdictions and attended by representatives from 50 states and territories. This effort has resulted in the formation of a network of hundreds of individuals and agencies across the country dedicated to furthering the advancement and progressive evolution of competency-based employment, training and educational programming;
- Multiple instances of state-to-state cross-fertilization and knowledge sharing, such as distribution of model approaches; and
- Countless intra-state and local conferences, procedural issuances and how-to guides.

In order to determine the status of initiatives taken by states in the area of youth competencies, the State of Vermont conducted a phone survey of 52 states and territories on June 14-15, 1984, getting answers to the following questions:

1. Has your State/territory either conducted in-state training, published policy initiatives, issued technical assistance guides,

developed handbooks/instructions, set minimal requirements, or formed statewide work groups or task forces on youth competencies and/or youth programs (answer yes if one or more of the above)?

Response: 50 yes; 1 no; 1 no answer (52 total)

2. Does your State/territory have competency systems development assigned to a person or unit of state government?

Response: 51 yes; 1 no (52 total)

3. Is your State/territory or any Service Delivery Area now operating competency systems? If so, when did it start? If not, when will it begin?

Response: 34 yes; 17 will be within 6 months; 1 no; (52 total)

Yes, the employment and training field under JTPA is "buying into" youth competencies and working hard to set up good competency-based programs. Two-thirds of the states and territories have formed task forces focusing on various dimensions of the competency concept, with these groups comprising persons from the private sector, education, labor, PIC, SDA and state staffs, community-based organizations and project contractors. More than 300 SDAs in cooperation with their local PICs, are at some stage in the development of solid youth competencies systems. Across the county, in-school and at-risk youth are being served because of the institution of the competency construct, despite fears of "creaming."

Competencies are indeed feasible within the JTPA framework and are evolving rapidly despite a slow start-up period in which administrative concerns such as SDA designation and PIC certification assumed first priority. Establishing youth competency systems will let programs move beyond labels and assumptions

in serving those most in need and capable of benefitting from participation. Projects can now identify the learning requirements of young people in relation to their desired post-program labor market status, and address them within a continuum of activities couched in a hierarchy of career development.

Though a lot has been done, more remains to be accomplished. It could take three to five years to design, implement and refine a comprehensive competency system. The "technology of competencies" (writing competency statements, instituting measurement instrumentation and utilizing the data generated) must be set up within the context of the way programs operate, the results they seek and the resources they have. In order to avoid "reinventing the wheel," necessary linkages must be forged.

People are taught about competencies most effectively through a four-phase, experiential, "hands-on" learning approach encompassing general orientation, specific training, on-site technical assistance, and follow-up problem-solving and trouble shooting to "iron out the bugs" once a system has been in place locally for some time. Helpful vehicles include information exchange, document dissemination, colloquia, and brokering of expertise.

Given the fact that the laws allow for vast numbers of different organizational units under JTPA to eventually promulgate competency systems, it becomes clear that many operational and administrative variables on the national, state and local levels must still be addressed. This should be done in a flexible fashion to match the appropriate resources with the right entities at the proper point in their evolution.

In the near future, there should be active, formulative work, specialized help and cataloging and referral mechanisms in such key areas as:

- o targeting and selection procedures;
- o multidimensional employability and career development practices;
- o curriculum design and lesson construction;
- o learning techniques and teaching frameworks;

- o instructional means (paper/pencil, audiovisual, computer);
- o job classification and task analysis formats;
- o testing methods and measurement instruments;
- o credentialing; and
- o MIS/IMS, data collection and reporting tools.

The growth of the competencies concept is a dynamic, not a static process, which requires a commitment to extended follow-through. The underlying premise is that JTPA represents a revamping of the way youth are served by the employment and training field. For the first time, youth programs will be able to attest to the skills youth attain through a competency-based approach.

APPENDIX I

Establishing a Youth Competency System

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Establishing A Youth Competency System

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The Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) calls for programs serving youth to have performance standards and measures that will reflect the accomplishment of overall program purposes. This includes the attainment by participants 21 years and under of employability competencies recognized by Private Industry Councils (PICs).

Before JTPA, performance assessment focused on post-termination labor market status and activity with goals such as "75% of all youth leaving the program will enter unsubsidized employment and 60% of them will stay on the job for 180 days." Under JTPA, outcomes review is expanded to the area of competencies acquired through program participation and the institution of goals such as "75% of all youth will learn to install basic kitchen wiring, with 60% of them achieving an eighth grade reading level required to take the electrician apprenticeship test."

JTPA provides the crack in the national policy door through which young people and youth-serving projects can receive credit for marketable skills acquired from intake up to the point of termination. Changing the emphasis from process to the full range of program outcomes promotes accountability and justification of expenditures, determination of cost effectiveness, and the evaluation of intra-program participant gains and post-program results.

At the state policy level, youth competencies can help achieve the objectives of the 8% governor's set-aside under Title IIA to: (a) establish state education coordination and cooperation agreements, and (b) deliver employability enriching services to program youth. The states might use youth competencies as a basis for making incentive awards, providing required technical assistance or instituting corrective action under the 6% governor's set-aside. At state and local levels, they can provide a forum for interaction and collaboration among employers, organized labor officials, educators and vocational training administrators, legislators and practitioners.

However, JTPA's emphasis on competency standards places a heavy burden on the local PIC which must determine the competency measures and criteria for the standards, a task lying outside the usual domain of the PIC. No one is standing forward to provide nationally the systemic guidance and technical support needed, and previous research never culminated in a document or approach readily usable by PICs and Service Delivery Areas (SDAs) to develop the full range of competency measures for youth performance standards. The problem then becomes one of reconciling the mandate of the new legislation with the capabilities of local PICs and SDAs across the country.

The Foundation

Youth programs under JTPA seek to improve employability and employment prospects. Employability development instills the capacity to find, obtain, retain and advance in a position after leaving school or a training program. Employment entails actual possession of a job, earnings and the amount of time worked.

As young people grow, they pass through various learning stages and phases of labor market participation. Intervening in this process requires a developmental perspective encompassing prevocational preparation, formative job exploration and experience, training and remediation, and unsubsidized career entry work. Growth in these different areas can occur simultaneously. The key is to translate understanding into action and knowledge into behavior by providing the appropriate services to the right participants at the proper time.

Competency measures are statements of proficiency in particular cognitive or affective skills which must be demonstrated by program youth. Benchmarking is a means of documenting the acquisition of a comprehensive range of employability competencies in concrete and measurable terms. When a particular level of ability is attained on specific indicators, participants are said to have achieved competency in that area. Local decision-makers will determine those indicators that must be achieved to show that the total competency has been accomplished.

The major competencies which signify the readiness of youth to transition from the program are:

- **Pre-employment skills:** World of work awareness, labor market knowledge, occupational information, values clarification and personal understanding, career planning, decision-making and job search techniques. They also encompass survival skills such as using the phone, telling time, shopping, making change, renting an apartment, opening a bank account, and using public transportation. Pre-employment measures for a specific locality would represent the best ways to get and keep a job there and the nature of work opportunities available.
- **Work maturity skills:** Positive work habits, attitudes and behavior, such as punctuality, regular attendance, neat appearance, getting along and working well with others, good conduct, following instructions and completing tasks, accepting criticism, showing initiative and reliability and assuming responsibilities involved in keeping a job. This category also entails developing motivation, obtaining effective interpersonal relations, coping and problem-solving skills, and acquiring an improved self-image. The work maturity measures represent the local work ethic as it relates to jobs in the community.
(The above two areas have been combined by the Department of Labor to ease implementation and operations.)
- **Basic education skills:** Reading comprehension, math computation, writing, speaking, listening, nonverbal communication and the ability to use these skills in the workplace. While general sets of measures in the pre-employment and work maturity areas can be applied to participants in all types of work and training activities, basic education benchmarks are directly affected by the nature of specific jobs and careers and their requirements. Thus, work-related academic skills necessary for setting competency standards are linked to enrollee choices of occupation for training and post-program employment. Other options for basic education skills measures are the achievement of a standardized incremental gain — e.g., a two-grade reading level increase per participant from the individual's starting point at program entry or attainment of a GED. In this competency area, it is especially important to avoid elitist and exclusionary practices.

• **Primary job-specific skills:** Proficiency at performing actual tasks required by occupational fields at entry, intermediate or advanced levels. Secondary job-specific skills entail familiarity with and use of set-up procedures, safety measures, work-related terminology, recordkeeping and paperwork formats, tools, equipment and materials and breakdown and clean-up routines. As with the basic education category, these skills measures are directly affected by the nature of the occupations involved. Therefore, the job-specific skills necessary for determining competency measures are also related to enrollee training and career decisions. This area probably has the widest variety of implementation alternatives and may be the most difficult to set up.

Competency criteria are formulated around functional program-related skills and reflect actual learning and achievement, not just the passage of time. They should be simply stated, easily understood, practical, attainable and accurately measurable.

Programs are then structured to meet the total employability and employment needs of each youth to the extent permitted by available time and money. Setting competency standards allows programs to be recognized for enhancing the job readiness of youth even though the participant may not immediately find job placement. Under JTPA, a youth need only be included in those competency categories in which there is a knowledge or skill deficit.

Development and Implementation

Those charged with any phase of benchmarking the acquisition of youth competencies should be aware of the different roles and responsibilities at different levels. The state role will be to facilitate local capacities to design and implement competency-based procedures. PICs, SDAs and program operators are responsible for actually developing the benchmarking process and making it work at the point of enrollee contact. The main actors should coordinate their efforts as much as possible to evolve substantive measures that can be transferred among companies, industries, and labor markets. This can only benefit program participants.

At the local level, competency measures must be accounted for in project plans, curriculum formulation, instructional formats and the choice of program mix options. Reviewing and compiling individual competency gains and determining total program impact must be coordinated with targeting and selection, activity assignment, service delivery arrangements, fiscal and management information systems and reporting and tracking requirements. In-school and out-of-school variations, client flow and length of participation, staff training, environmental factors and maintenance of congruent relationships between main program segments are major application issues to be considered.

Systemic effects must also be anticipated. The same competency-based framework would probably apply to every program operator and contractor within an SDA. Standardized pre-employment and work maturity measures can be used across the board for all modalities. This would hold for basic education and job-specific skills benchmarks where groups of participants are preparing for the same career, as in classroom training.

In activities such as on-the-job training, however, where enrollees are usually involved in a variety of occupations with different academic and technical requirements, competency measures for basic education and job-specific skills could be adjusted to account for the range of vocational preparation required by individual youth. This could conserve money and staff time, maintain project relevancy for young people focusing on particular kinds of employment and help avoid draining program resources. Such circumstances could influence the flexibility and configuration of the service delivery system, the customization and variety of program offerings and the standardized/individualized nature of activity options.

A competency-based approach might be constructed from a matrix which includes youth requirements, competencies to be taught, their sources of acquisition (for example, different components and project operators) and means of measurement. Instituting a competency system should be done gradually, especially for job-specific skills and related basic education capabilities which indicate job readiness. Begin with a few demand occupations and see what the results are. By starting small and slowly, necessary adjustments will be manageable.

Experience has shown that the development and implementation of the following steps influence the successful application of competency measures (which can be drawn up by program staff, PIC members, outside experts or some combination thereof):

1. Identify program goals and participant-related learning objectives.

2. State appropriate general skills domains (pre-employment, work maturity, basic education and job-skills).

3. Specify the competencies, i.e., the broad behavioral statements that flow from program purpose and desired outcomes.

4. Formulate relevant indicators of successful performance that have predictive validity for each competency.

5. Determine overall standards of achievement (include educators and labor representatives in these deliberations). This can be a long, difficult, consensus-building process leading to the desired feelings of acceptance and ownership and the elimination of "turf" problems. Factors related to economic development, occupational demand, present employment opportunities and projected future openings might be addressed here as well as the area's rural, urban or suburban nature.

6. Select measurement instruments and assessment/evaluation techniques such as behavioral observation, simulated situations, mock episodes, product reviews, work samples, oral and written questions. Attention should be given to validity, reliability, usefulness, freedom from content or cultural bias, and objectivity.

7. Institute statistical or narrative scoring methods such as checklists, rating scales, weighted factors and paper and pencil exercises. Determine the appropriateness of using norming and/or criterion-referenced approaches.

8. Decide on the level of performance necessary to meet competency criteria such as nine out of 10, x percentage, average quality/quantity of output, test score cut-off point, or position on a curve, as well as duration of time over which a youth should demonstrate mastery.

9. Design formats for recording, interpreting and utilizing pre- and post-information generated, with appropriate consideration given to use of manual or automated systems. Ascertain documentation and client feedback needs. Try to keep paperwork as light as possible.

10. Consider developing a formal certificate that indicates some or all of the competencies gained by participants. This could be used an an employability profile, product portfolio, job passport, program transcript, diploma, letter of reference or recommendation beneficial to youth and acknowledged by employers. If acceptable to local/state education agencies, it might also be used as a means of obtaining academic credit. Such a certificate could motivate or reinforce the efforts of youth, gain employer acceptance and serve as a feeder to the substate MIS designed to access performance standards' credit and fiscal awards.

11. Develop a marketing strategy for obtaining legitimacy with local business and industries. This could be done in a variety of ways including surveys, in-person contacts and meetings. Improved skills mean little if not recognized by employers as indicative of significant achievement by program participants. The best way to "sell" competency standards is through a proven track record and by turning out solid products, i.e., youth who can do what the criteria say they can. This would help young people satisfy hiring requirements or fulfill admissions qualifications for apprenticeship programs, further training, military service or higher education. Such an effort could encompass strategies designed to make entry criteria relevant and reality based, instead of artificial and possibly overly exclusive or discriminatory. One way to gain local acceptance, assure

quality control, get people involved and achieve change would be to invite employers, educators, training facility representatives and armed forces recruiters to participate in evaluating samples of youth who program operators say have attained PIC-recognized competencies.

12. Ascertain numbers, types and expertise of personnel necessary, degree of staff training required, divisions of labor — by position and function, logistics and costs involved, materials, space and time entailed, institutional and organizational linkages.

13. Prepare to overcome staff resentment and insecurity. Benchmarking can be used as a means of staff evaluation and institutional accountability. Program staff may begrudge the extra work entailed or feel their positions threatened. They must be convinced that the investment of time and self will benefit both participants and themselves. There are also considerations of "teaching to the test" and instructors benchmarking their own students. In addition, youth must understand and "buy into" the competency-based system for it to work. Project and personal relevancy should be made clear to a clientele of increasingly "program-wise" youth.

14. Field test and validate these new approaches, making refinements based on adjustments of curriculum and training activities, advancements of learning technology, changes in labor market trends and projections, satisfaction of employer requirements and relationships between benchmarking and post-program employment success.

Operational and Management Assistance

The first nine-month program period will be the time frame for PICs and SDAs to develop their competency criteria and prepare their program staff to implement these procedures. In many cases, structural changes will preceed setting up as competency based approved, especially in those jurisdictions not used to this mode of operation and management. Therefore, during that time, states should consider making an adequate base of technical support available to their localities. Such assistance might include the following five elements:

1. Formulation of concepts and definitions of terms.
2. Promulgation of working practices and procedures.
3. Production of appropriate materials.
4. Delivery of training and technical assistance and dissemination of materials.
5. Determination of the impact of technical support efforts.

Federal Actions — Present and Future Directions

Representative James Jeffords of Vermont, the House Education and Labor Committee's youth advocate, has long noted that achievement of youth competencies recognized by the PIC is an appropriate factor for evaluating the performance of youth programs. He and others feared that the youth performance standards (82% positive terminations, 41% entered employment and $4900 cost per positive termination) would promote creaming and encourage the exclusion of in-school youth. They have continually encouraged the Department of Labor's (DOL) Employment and Training Administration (ETA) to include the statutorily defined and acceptable outcome — the attainment of youth competencies — as a positive termination factor.

Their efforts led to the issuance of ETA Field Memo 76-83, Change 1, dated October 7, 1983. Now governors may permit SDAs to count youth who terminate from JTPA programs and meet the youth competency requirements set by the local PIC, as positive terminations for purposes of calculating the positive termination rate and cost per positive termination. Including youth attaining competencies in the establishment and subsequent measurement of the two positive termination performance standards is permissible if the state determines (a) that a locality has a youth competency system in place and (b) that the PIC has recognized these employment competencies. If it is decided that an SDA's youth competency system has not been sufficiently developed to accurately measure participant achievement or enable the PIC to recognize such competencies, the governor should modify the performance standards accordingly. ETA will be providing assistance for adjustment in the near future to follow up its recent issuance in the February 1, 1984 *Federal Register*. This new flexibility should make it easier for localities to serve a wide range of in-school youth within their jurisdictions.

The State does not approve youth employment competency systems, nor the competencies recognized by the PICs. These are local decisions, as are judgments about whom to serve and how to serve them. The framework within which an SDA's youth competency system should be developed includes:

a. One, some or all of the major competency areas described herein;
b. An upfront assessment to determine participant intraprogram needs;
c. An incremental/post-program evaluation to ascertain that a youth has attained the competencies specified for him/her.

States have an opportunity for quality assurance as they determine whether PICs have recognized and approved the stated competencies in each locality and the capacity of the measurement system to reflect the acquisition of youth competencies.

In the development and implementation realms, ETA has helped establish a solid first-step foundation by commissioning Brandeis University to prepare a technical assistance guide entitled: *An Introduction to Competency-Based Employment and Training Programming for Youth Under the Job Training Partnership Act*. ETA has also awarded a contract for a research project entitled *Developing a National Employment Competency Attainment Standard to Evaluate the Performance of Youth Employment and Training Programs*.

The first year of JTPA could be used as a data base and source of information for "modeling" (or other advanced statistical methodologies) pursuant to formulating state or national standards, or — more importantly — as a chance to "shake down" locally centered systems and smooth out some of the rough spots. What might evolve is a single national approach or totally separate, non-uniform state, substate or local systems. Presently, however, issues are affected by a variety of philosophical and practical considerations. It is, therefore, difficult to predict the eventual youth competencies model on a nationwide basis.

In the interim, actions which could be undertaken across the country include:

- Functional aid (available on both a centralized and localized basis across the country) for those charged with establishing and implementing systems to document, demonstrate and certify the acquisition of youth competencies;
- Active formulative work and specialized help in curriculum design, testing methods, targeting procedures, learning techniques, career development practices, credentialing, and comprehensive data collection tools;
- Information, cataloging and referral mechanisms for proven lessons, instructional means (paper/pencil, audiovisual and computer), measurement instruments and innovative coordination linkages;
- Local staff development package;
- State capacity building — "train the trainer" — format;
- Review and publicization of the aforementioned process;
- Tie-in with the DOL research project for start-up help and data gathering;
- Input to long-term strategies for purposes of merging and institutionalizing the concept of youth competencies with the practices and procedures entailed in performance standards application and utilization.

Such actions would be beneficial to young people, programs and the overall employment, training and educational system. Eventually, policy makers and project decision-makers should consider the possible extension of the competencies concept to adult and older workers also.

For some young people, achieving competencies may well be the goal (for example, eligible in-school youth planning to continue on to graduation). For others, this intra-program learning will be the means

of acquiring their desired post-program status (for example, those seeking to enter the world of work, further education or training or the military). The most important thing is to provide the participants with the opportunity to obtain the skills they need while enrolled in JTPA programs.

Conclusion

It is pivotal to utilize PY'84 as a transition period to develop and field test competency measures, prepare technical assistance guides and deliver training to those charged with making the new system work better for participants and employers. Many of the new elements are so complicated that they will be difficult for even highly motivated SDAs to assimilate and implement. Unless the technical support needed by the PICs is available, the progressive move towards competency-based program standards is seriously jeopardized.

An Introduction to Competency-Based Employment and Training Programming for Youth Under JTPA. Study by Brandeis University under USDOL contract.
Contact: Jim Wiggins, U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration. Phone: 202/376-6622.

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Contact: Rick Spill, 202/624-7810.

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Phone: 801/583-3666

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Contact: Jim Massey, 503/776-5100 or 503/479-7861

State of Colorado.
Contact: Stella Madrid, 303/866-3165.

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Contact: Phillip Thibodeau, 207/289-3375.

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Contact: Professor Brian Nedwek, 314/658-3934.

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Contact: Robert Taggart, 703/836-7030.

State of Colorado Board for Community Colleges and Occupational Education.
Contact: Carole Johnson, 303/866-2335.

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Contacts: Andrew Hahn/Erik Butler 800/343-4705 or 343-4706.

San Mateo County Office of Education - Youth Employment Competencies Exchange. Redwood City, CA.
Contact: Joe Cooney, 415/363-5439.

Greater Peninsula Job Training Consortium Service Delivery Area, Hampton, VA.
Contact: William Mann, 804/838-5206.

All involved parties should attempt to build upon what has already been done and utilize all existing resources. We don't need to "re-invent the wheel." Our colleagues in the field of competency-based education have been at it for years and doing well. They stand ready to help, along with those from vocational-technical institutes, proprietary schools, business training departments in the private sector, basic education, alternative education and GED programs in the public sector, apprenticeship projects, occupational licensing boards and collaborative labor union work preparation courses. Such resources are generally available in most localities. Whether these resources are offered fiscal, public relations, political or other incentives, it is important to involve them in the partnership, build the needed coalitions and begin to move forward in documenting participant achievement, thereby proving that program youth are indeed employable and job ready. Positive state and local competency-based initiatives related to JTPA are presently occuring in Maine, Michigan, Colorado and Oregon:

- In Maine, a workgroup comprising state personnel, SDA staff and members of the educational community has developed a fairly sophisticated pre-employment and work maturity package, including competency measures, assessment and evaluation procedures, a core curriculum which can be modified to meet local circumstances, a format for certification and forms to be used for recording and reporting the data generated. Next on this group's agenda are the basic educational categories and job-specific skills.
- In Michigan, a workgroup encompassing members from the governor's JTPA office and individuals from SDAs has designed an initial youth competencies system covering job-specific skills and work maturity. This effort entails a task analysis and occupational classification approach devised by educators from Michigan State University. The basic education category will be addressed next, then pre-employment.
- In Colorado, a statewide youth initiative has been formulated and signed by all cabinet level officials whose departments deal with human resources related problems. This comprehensive, collaborative effort involves vertical and horizontal cooperation and coordination among state and local agencies in a variety of fields. The objective is to maximize the utilization of funds, facilitate total — yet non-duplicative — delivery of assistance to needy clients on a continuum of services basis and eliminate overlap and fragmentation. This creative, innovative and far-reaching venture has been in operation for three years, and has made great progress through the vehicle of demonstration projects to pilot test new approaches. Great strides are currently being made in the area of competency-based employment and training programming for young people.
- In Oregon, the governor's Job Training Partnership Act office is working closely with the educational community to establish systems to develop and document the acquisition of youth competencies. The Jackson-Josephine County PIC of Medford, Oregon, has put together a model set of youth competencies, demonstrating that employers can become effectively involved if given the chance.

Other outstanding examples of youth competency systems may be found at the Peninsula Office of Manpower Programs in Norfolk, Va., and the Rock Island, Ill., SDA.

Most in the employment and training community have been doing some form of benchmarking for years. To date, it's usually been informal and non-systematized. Now there is a need to put it together into a package with formal methods and techniques, accurate baseline data and results marketable in the real world of work.

While state and national aggregation will need more comparable measurement instruments, sophisticated modeling procedures and detailed information, local impact could be felt during the first nine months, thanks to the opportunity provided by JTPA. Even in a troubled economy, acquisition of the capacity to find, get and keep a job and advance in a career is a positive thing for JTPA youth. Through demonstration of employability competencies, young people show that they have the tools for self-sufficiency. As has been said many times before — give a man a fish, and you feed him for a meal; teach a man to fish and you feed him for life.

Benchmarking Exercise

At one time, enrollees of the Androscoggin County (Maine) Neighborhood Youth Corps Program wrote a poem for their departing director which went as follows:

"What I hear, I forget;
What I see, I remember;
What I do, I know."

These young people believed that this short message captured their director's philosophy of instruction and development, and in fact it did — quite accurately.

The experiential learning approach provides the foundation for this exercise, during which adults involved in various ways in JTPA are asked to take part in a role-playing task designed to result in a benchmark application to youth programs. Many interesting things take place during this episode. People find out that concepts and constructs "familiar to all" are really not understood the same way by everybody. Participating individuals must distinguish between definition and application, substance and procedure, theories and techniques. Long-held prejudices, principles and beliefs rise to the surface and influence the discussion. These attitudes reflect various local work ethics, personal habits, organizational practices and parental thoughts on acceptable behavior.

The methodology for implementing this exercise depends on the size, enthusiasm, and willingness of the audience to participate. It may be possible and even advisable to involve the total group if there are less than 30 people. On the other hand, for purposes of manageability and illustration, it is suggested that for groups of more than 30 individuals, five to ten persons might volunteer to go through the episode, thereby paralleling the (sub)committee approach to compromise, consensus-building, and decision-making. Regardless of the means utilized, the purpose of the experience is to demonstrate to those participating and/or watching that developing a system for documenting the acquisition of youth competencies involves common sense, ability to communicate and understanding of the labor market.

The chart on page 39 is exactly as utilized at a series of conferences on performance standards co-sponsored by DOL and the National Governors' Association (NGA). The group exercise, conducted through use of this chart as a visual aid, is explained and facilitated by the workshop leader. Items "a" through "f" set the scene, define the various roles to be played, and establish the objective, which is to formulate a youth competency statement related to being "on time." Items "g" through "k" incorporate some of the main elements in designing benchmarks and serve as a checklist of factors which the group would need to address in going through its decision-making process and completing its task, e.g. what constitutes punctuality? How would it be measured? What happens to those youth who don't achieve the competency? Topics covered in the paper, such as "indicators, levels and measurements," are utilized as points for initiating group discussion and issue processing.

Chart for Workshop: Developing a Benchmark for Youth Competencies

a) **Task** - Design a benchmark that is relevant to the "real" world of work and possible to implement.

b) **Setting** - Old Dominion Bank Building Boardroom.

c) **Time** - Tuesday evening at 6:30 p.m. (sometime in the future . . .)

d) **Participants** - PIC members, including employers who have hiring authority, SDA/Local Elected Official representative (s) (if politically feasible), (state) provider of technical assistance and training (if possible), etc.

e) **Competency Category** - Preemployment/Work Maturity.

f) **Standard (Behavioral Area)** - Punctuality.

g) **Indicators** - Physical presence (on street, in building, in room at seat or work station); number of minutes leeway (one, two, three, four, five...).

h) **Levels** - Timeframe of application (first week, second week, third week); percentage required (80%, 90%, 100%); mitigating factors (sick, emergency, transportation problems, "overslept"), and verification thereof . . . .

i) **Measurement** - Instructor observation; honor system; time clock; group "input" (bureaucratic term for "tattling").

j) **Penalties** - Time docking; program reassignment; separation/termination . . . .

k) **Additional Considerations** - Variations in client characteristics, services and activities, incremental/unit learning objectives, and project environment, as well as means of recording, reporting, retrieving and utilizing data on an aggregate or individualized basis.

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